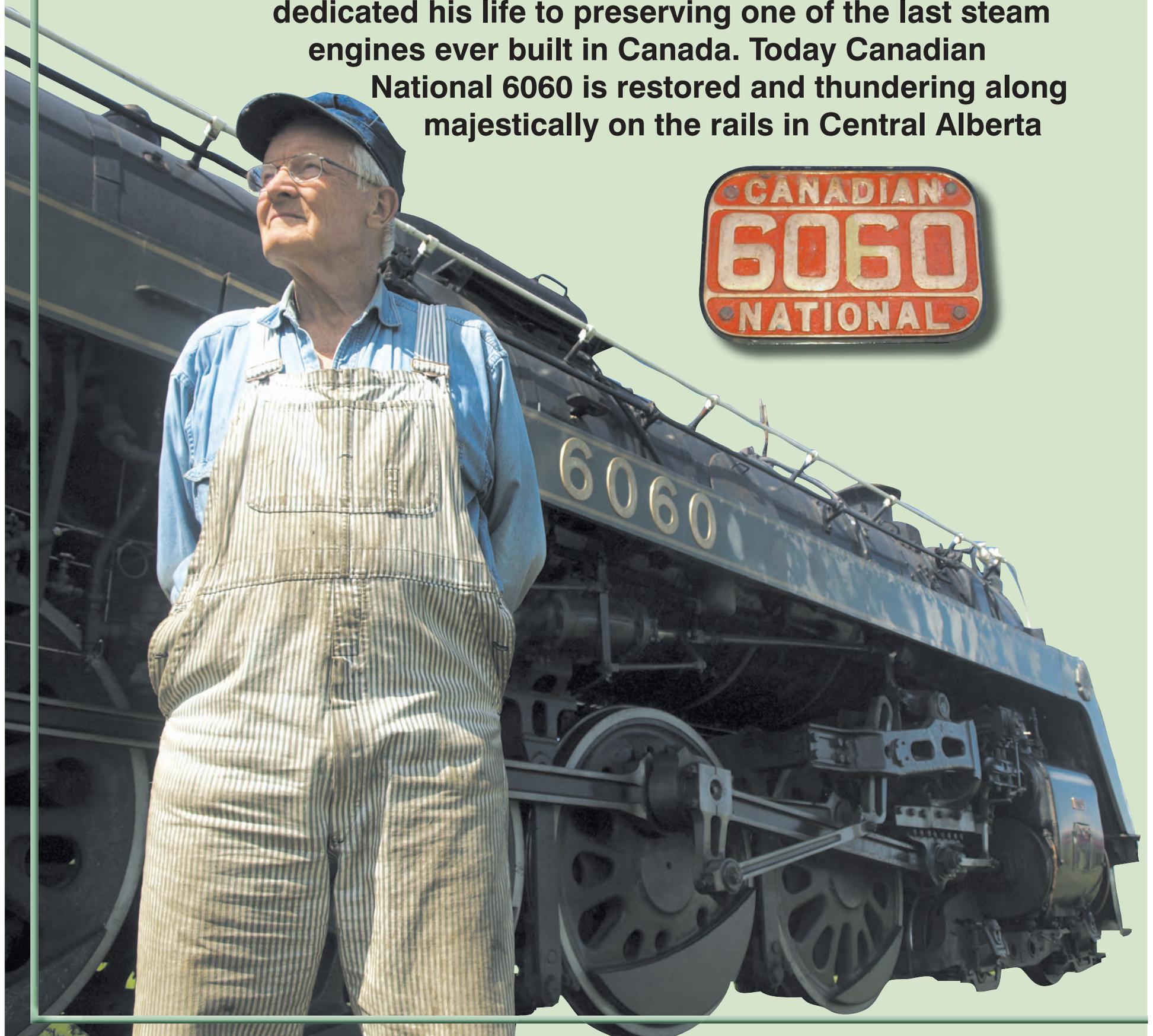


Story and photos  
by Johnnie Bachusky  
Red Deer Express

# 6060 TURNS 66

For half a century train engineer Harry Home had dedicated his life to preserving one of the last steam engines ever built in Canada. Today Canadian National 6060 is restored and thundering along majestically on the rails in Central Alberta





**TAKING OFF** - The 6060 blows off smoke as it departs Big Valley to head back to Stettler.



**ALWAYS THRILLED** - Harry Home is a resident of Jasper but is always available and willing to operate the 6060 from Stettler to Big Valley.

**BY JOHNNIE BACHUSKY**  
Red Deer Express

**T**here is nothing more rewarding and exciting for Harry Home when he puts his hand on the throttle to take Canadian National 6060 for a ride.

The pure elation he feels at the controls has been with him for more than 70 years since the day his father, a CN engineer, let him have the throttle on steam engine CN 2021 in Hanna.

"He let me stand on the seat box and I burnt my hand when I touched the throttle," said Home. "But I have never forgotten the thrill of making that locomotive move. I knew right then what I wanted to be."

Home, now 77-years-old, officially began his railway career on July 28, 1949 as a train fireman at Boston Bar, BC.

He retired "reluctantly" as an engineer on May 14, 1998. But since his retirement he has been busier than ever as he continued to be the primary guardian of CN 6060. It is one of the last steam engines ever built in Canada and is known today as "The Spirit of Alberta", as well as "Bullet Nosed Betty."

The 6060, now owned by the non-profit Rocky Mountain Rail Society (RMRS), has been the headline attraction along the 21-mile Stettler to Big Valley line this summer for Alberta Prairie Railway, which offers steam and diesel rail excursions - along with full course buffet meals, on board entertainment and even a mock train robbery - from spring to fall.

The excursions have become a major tourist attraction with thousands regularly packing the train for a leisurely trek across the Central Alberta prairie. With the 637,540-lb. 6060 leading the way, passengers get a glimpse of the simple and humble joys of a magnificent pioneer way of life.



**PIONEER AMBIENCE** - When the 6060 arrives in Big Valley passengers are greeted with a flavour from the past.

"It is an experience for them, and they want their kids to experience that. A lot of them have been on a train, and they are not going to be on another train," said Don Gillespie, CEO and president of Alberta Prairie Railway.

"Steam is what they come for of course. And it (6060) is a big beautiful engine."

But the heart of the experience always leads back to the helm of this remarkable steam engine. This is where Home, whose residence is in Jasper, performs his labour of love.

"The way I describe it is that we are trying to preserve the past while serving the future," said Home, a member of the Canadian Railway Hall of Fame. "We are trying to preserve a way of life that was strictly Canadiana, and every part of it, from being in a railway home, and mother preparing meals

Rich Graydon. "If you look at the communities we live in, they are almost all connected in some way to the railway. Either because they developed to serve the railway or the railway came to serve them.

"In today's society we seem to be in a real hurry to forget and remove the past without taking time to learn from it. 6060 is a living artifact that demonstrates the peak of steam engine design and what was accomplished by Canadians."

However, to maintain the 6060 to its full glory requires resources and money, and society members hope to raise up to \$75,000 to replace its boiler safety valves, to repaint the engine, replace parts, and to restore historic railway cars and equipment.

Meanwhile, while the society continues its hard work on the ongoing maintenance of 6060 Home also wants to find funding to build a permanent home for the steam engine in Stettler because he believes the Central Alberta town should be known nationally as the "Steam Capital of Canada."

"I'm very proud to be a member of the railway fraternity. I've had the honour of working on this engine and other steam engines. I've had the honour and the pleasure of viewing the Atlantic and the Pacific from the cab of this engine," said Home. "It was a good life and it is still is."

For more information on the Rocky Mountain Rail Society visit its web site at [www.6060.org](http://www.6060.org) or email [richndar@shaw.ca](mailto:richndar@shaw.ca). For more on Alberta Prairie Railway and its tourist excursions visit [www.absteamtrain.com](http://www.absteamtrain.com) or email [info@absteamtrain.com](mailto:info@absteamtrain.com).

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**The way I describe it is that we are trying to preserve the past while serving the future.**  
- Harry Home

around dad's schedules. All the railroad kids really enjoyed the way of life we had."

It has now been a full half century Home has played his remarkable part in preserving 6060, which turns 66 this year.

It was originally built by an all female crew in 1944 at the Montreal Locomotive Works. For the next 15 years it logged thousands of miles between Ontario and Quebec hauling passengers and freight. But by 1959, with the railway industry transitioning to diesel, the steam era was over. CN 6060 was retired and destined for the scrap heap.

But in 1960, while on a stop in Winnipeg, Home noticed 6060 on a dead line. Knowing an important piece of history had a chance to be saved, he immediately got into action.

"My two buddies and I got busy. I did the letter writing and we lobbied and went to the CNR vice president Roger Graham. He agreed to give it to us in Jasper. It was brought to us in 1962," said Home.

The steam engine went on display in Jasper and a decade later underwent a major refurbishment. The 6060 arrived in Alberta in 1980 and was given to the Province of Alberta to celebrate its 75th anniversary.

Four years later Home and his friends founded the RMRS and 6060 has been under its loving care ever since.

"6060 is alive as far as I'm concerned and our efforts to preserve her feel like keeping a living breathing entity alive," said society spokesman



**TRAIN ROBBERS** - When tourists ride the train on the Stettler to Big Valley trip they are treated with an old-fashioned train robbery by the Reynolds Raiders. All proceed go to charity.